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ABSTRACT

Career development in Canada has been gaining prominence over the past decade. This digest outlines the principles on which career development must remain focused. First, the meaning of "career success" needs to be reconceptualized. With companies downsizing, people need to be able to view themselves as successful, despite changing circumstances. Second, people need to expand their skills to succeed in the work place, such as increasing self-motivation and recognizing opportunity in changing circumstances. Third, counselors must recognize that many people feel trapped and they need programs to help them make transitions to more meaningful situations. Fourth, the needs of older workers in retirement must be recognized, particularly with the increasing number of people nearing retirement age. Fifth, the scope and practice of career development needs to expand, while concepts of career education, career guidance, and career counseling must be updated. Sixth, alternative delivery systems should be developed so as to make career guidance accessible throughout an individual's lifespan. Seventh, the scope of practice of those working in career development will need to expand as counselors move away from traditional individual client interactions. Eighth, standards of training and service deliver must be in place to assure clients that service providers have appropriate training. And finally, evaluation approaches must be modified and more readily accepted to increase accountability. (RJM)

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by Bryan Hiebert and M. Lynne Bezanson

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On The Horizon: Important Future Directions For Career Development

Bryan Hiebert & M. Lynne Bezanson

Overview

Career development in Canada is undergoing exciting changes. Many good initiatives have been sponsored by provincial and federal government departments. With CAMCRY, Stay In School, Youth Services Canada, and Youth Internships, substantial financial resources have been invested. Excellent programs have been developed. Many well-trained professionals are now working in the area of career development. Equally important, many others now see the need for career development and are actively supporting it. Career development is moving into the mainstream and gaining a greater profile within professional circles.

Discussion

The need for career development is enormous. High unemployment is a global problem and Canada's figures fall within the mid-range. There is agreement that the "old way" of "one job for life" is no longer a reality for most people. It is possible that, in the future, there will not be enough paid employment for all. Therefore, there is a need to build on, and extend what we have accomplished, in order to meet the challenges of the future.

It is dangerous and inappropriate to "crystal ball gaze," but it is possible to suggest some issues that will need to be addressed, and outline some of what is—or will need to be, on the horizon, in order for career development to remain a vital force.

1. *The meaning of "career success" needs to be reconceptualized.*

Baby boomers, the largest demographic group in Canada, have been taught to believe that a stable career is good—if people work hard, and earn a good education, they will be assured of work, will be able to choose any job, and may remain in that job as long as they want. Success is defined in terms of "upward" mobility— mobility through, or upward into another organization.

Now the rules have changed. Companies are downsizing. There is massive unemployment and a surplus of qualified workers in many areas. Quota systems in most universities prevent many youth from getting into the program of their choice. Those who do get the program they want may find there are no jobs available in that area when they graduate. There is a dramatic increase in part-time jobs, contract work, and "portfolio people."

The meaning of "career success" needs to be revised so that people are able to view themselves as successful, despite changing circumstances. People are not necessarily failures if they "only find part time work" or if they change jobs every 2-3 years. While it is true that some people lack the skills to maintain permanent work, it is also true that others are forced to change jobs by system factors beyond their control. Therefore, it is important to develop a mind set that does not automatically assume that there is something wrong with people who change jobs frequently. Moreover, it will be important to legitimize the satisfaction and feeling of success which people derive from unpaid work.

The current bias towards occupations requiring a university education automatically excludes 80% of the population from entering "high status" jobs. More value must be placed on technical occupations, apprenticeships, trades, and other skilled work. Such alternatives may then be seen as legitimate "first choice" options for workers.

2. *People need expanded skills sets to succeed in the work place.*

Expanded skills sets are described in several sources. The Conference Board of Canada underscores higher order thinking, personal management, and team working skills (see McLaughlin, 1995). Borgen and Amundson (1995) outline a youth empowerment model that facilitates successful transitions. In addition, it is important that people learn how to be self-motivated, how to recognize opportunity in changing circumstances, how to find ways to promote satisfaction in their current jobs (focusing on the positive), and how to manage their self-talk so that it coaches facilitative behavior, productive thinking, and motivating affect. It is also be necessary to develop skills in marketing oneself, to enhance skills and attitudes that promote being flexible, and to foster skills for determining one's generic transferable skills.

3. *The needs of workers in transition must be recognized.*

Many people are in life roles in which they feel trapped. Such people as these who are between jobs, women returning to work, workers changing to more satisfying jobs, and workers wanting to renew their enthusiasm for their current jobs. Programs and methods need to be developed to assist these people in making transitions to more meaningful situ-

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ations.

4. *The needs of older workers in retirement must be recognized.*

With increasing numbers of people nearing retirement age, and with firms offering early retirement incentives, it will be important to change the concept of retirement from a transition to "doing nothing" to a *planned* change in focus." This may involve a gradual reduction of job hours while a worker explores other sources of satisfaction. It may also require formal career planning for the post-retirement career/life options. Most people who enjoy retirement find that they are busy pursuing non-paid work as sources of satisfaction (the term "volunteer work" is not a coincidence!).

5. *The scope and practice of career development needs to expand.*

The term "career/life" development acknowledges that career issues cannot be separated from other life issues. The domains of career counseling, career guidance, and career education need to be updated. As a point of discussion, we suggest the following:

- *Career education* will take place mostly in school classrooms, with a focus on developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes generic to most career/life transition situations. Increasingly, the focus is on an infusion model where career education becomes a component of several school subjects, English (e.g., résumé writing), and science (e.g., being aware of career possibilities in chemistry), and so forth. (See Millar, 1995).

- *Career guidance* (people often need a guide) will take place largely in small workshops and have a skill-training focus. Most European countries call this "careers guidance." In Canada, it's sometimes called "counseling," "workshops," or simply "group work." In some cases, guidance may be individualized, but the focus will be either on skill training, or marketing, or placement.

- *Career counseling* may involve individuals or groups, but the agenda will include complicated skill sets or long-standing problems, such as contextual situations or client barriers.

6. *Alternative delivery systems need to be developed.*

A revised delivery system will make career guidance/counseling accessible to all, across the life span. This may involve the promotion of a "Career Development Culture." Just as "Participaction" increased the awareness of the importance of physical fitness for health, promoting a "Career Development Culture" will help people take charge of their career/life paths. There may be a need for periodic "career check-ups," where workers at all levels and in all jobs take stock of their career direction and map out their future career/life plans. Part of a new delivery system may include the three-component model of self-help, group work (guidance), and individual work (guidance or counseling), which is summarized by Kellett and Conger (1995).

7. *The scope of practice of those working in career development will need to be expanded.*

Counselors need to break out of the traditional mold which emphasizes individual client interactions. Many client problems are more amenable to group intervention. Working with third parties (families, employers, other agencies) is increasingly important in helping clients achieve their goals. Practitioners need to become adept at marketing their programs, and the results of their interventions, to the public, and to their clients, supervisors, managers, and co-workers. Social action also has a legitimate role for career development practitioners, such as wheel chair access in public buildings for handicapped clients.

8. *There is a need for standards of training and service delivery.*

Currently there is no accepted training standard for those working in career development and no guidelines for quality assurance in service delivery. A multi-level set of standards should be developed to assure clients that service providers (classroom teachers, school counselors, agency counselors, contract trainers, and so forth) have appropriate training to deliver services. Commensurate with this, guidelines are needed to guarantee that adequate services are offered in career development. This will ensure that quality control procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the outcomes from each respective group.

9. *Evaluation approaches need to be modified and more readily accepted.*

The scope and context of evaluation needs to be expanded to include ways of tabulating the things that counselors do to keep clients motivated, gauge client progress, and teach clients how to be more aware of their successes. Increasing accountability concerns will make it important to develop non-intrusive ways to use naturally occurring events as evidence of client success. Currently, the profession is not good at this because people have applied little collective creativity towards developing valuation procedures. As we devote more energy to evaluation new methods will begin to emerge.

Conclusion

Career development has been gaining prominence over the past decade as more professionals and members of the public realize the important role that career/life planning plays in people's lives. The directions we propose will help ensure that career counseling, career guidance, and career education maintain the necessary relevance to remain in the mainstream of services. This, in turn, will help to increase the profile of career development in the eyes of practitioners in a wide variety of professional settings.

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